

Key West and Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuges

This blue goose, designed by J. N. "Ding" Darling, has become a symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Key West National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1908 as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds and other wildlife. The refuge encompasses more than 200,000 acres with only 2,000 acres of land. The area is home to more than 250 species of birds and is important for sea turtle nesting.

All of the islands in the refuge are designated as a part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Designated wilderness areas are managed to minimize human impacts and influences and to let natural processes occur without intervention. The refuge limits human use and influence in order to preserve the quality, character and integrity of these protected wilderness lands.

Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1938 as a haven for great white herons, migratory birds, and other wildlife. The refuge consists of almost 200,000 acres of open water and islands, and is known locally as the "backcountry." The refuge provides critical nesting, feeding, and resting areas for hundreds of species of birds and sea turtles.

The refuge was created to protect great white herons from extinction since the population was decimated by the demand for feathered hats. Protection of great white herons was successful, and these magnificent powder-white birds can be observed feeding on tidal-flats around hundreds of backcountry islands each dawn and dusk.

Mangrove islands are important bird nesting and roosting areas, and provide virtually no public use opportunities because upland areas do not exist. Islands with beaches are open to limited public access as marked with signs. Please obey refuge signs to help minimize disturbance to wildlife.

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary was designated in 1990 and protects 2,800 square nautical miles from Key Largo to the Dry Tortugas. This includes the waters of the Key West and Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuges. Visitors to the refuges should be aware that the sanctuary has established additional rules to protect the marine environment.

The sanctuary protects the marine portions of the refuges through a management partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).



Great white heron/USFWS

Sanctuary Preservation Areas have been designated at Sand Key, Rock Key and Eastern Dry Rocks (all located within Key West NWR) to protect coral reef habitats.

For the most current National Marine Sanctuary regulations please contact the Sanctuary office at 305/809 4700.

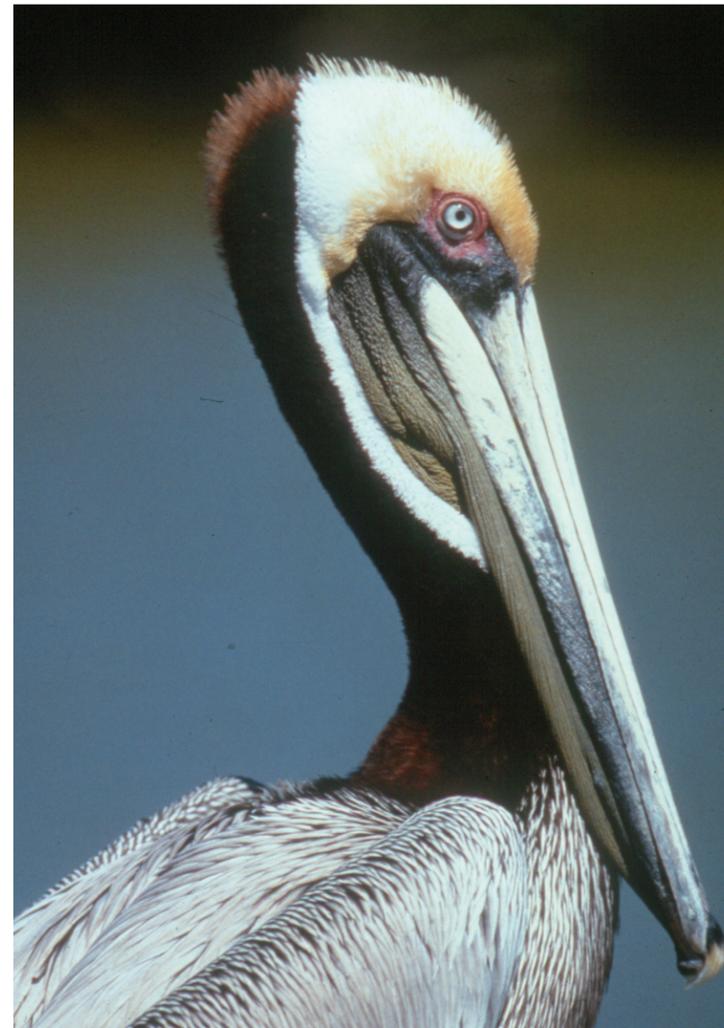
Sanctuary Regulations in Refuges

- No fishing allowed in Sanctuary Preservation Areas.
- Do not touch coral or anchor on coral.
- Do not discharge waste water
- Use dive flag when snorkeling or diving.
- Use mooring buoys when available.

For questions about allowable activities within the refuges please call 305/872 0774.

Allowed Activities

- Sport and commercial fishing in accordance with state and federal regulations.
- Recreational boating with conventional propeller- driven crafts, kayaks, canoes and sailboats.
- SCUBA diving and snorkeling.
- Wildlife viewing and photography.
- Refuge hours on islands are 1/2 hour before sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset.



Brown pelican/USFWS

Prohibited Activities

- Use of personal watercrafts, hovercrafts and airboats.
- Landing airplanes, helicopters or ultra-lights.
- Water skiing.
- Camping, open fires and pets on islands.
- Search for or removal of antiquities.
- Camping on refuge managed islands.
- No open fires.

Boating in the backcountry is challenging due to very shallow water depths. If you should run aground, please do not try to power-off the area since this results in extreme damage to the environment. Instead, trim up the motor and try to walk the boat to deeper water. You might have to wait for a high-tide to accomplish this.

Refuge Information/Visitor Center	305/872 0774
Refuge Headquarters	305/872 2239
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.....	305/809 4700
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission ...	305/289 2320
U.S. Coast Guard Key West.....	305/292 8856
Monroe County Sheriff.....	305/289 2430
Marine Mammal Stranding Hotline.....	888/404 3922
Injured or dead sea turtles	305/743 2552
Injured or sick birds	
Key West.....	305/292 1008
Big Pine Key	305/872 1982
Marathon.....	305/743 8382
Tavernier	305/852 4486
Monroe County Animal Control	
Key West SPCA.....	305/294 4857
Marathon SPCA	305/743 4800

National Key Deer Refuge
 28950 Watson Boulevard
 Big Pine Key, FL 33043
 Headquarters: 305/872 2239
 Fax: 305/872 3675
 Visitor Center: 305/872 0774
 E-mail: keydeer@fws.gov



Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
 Key West Office
 Nancy Foster Florida Keys Environmental Complex
 33 East Quay Road
 Key West, FL 33040
 305/809 4700

